BEGINNING: THE LAZARUS AFFAIR!
THE DEADLIEST MENACE EVER TO THREATEN THE...

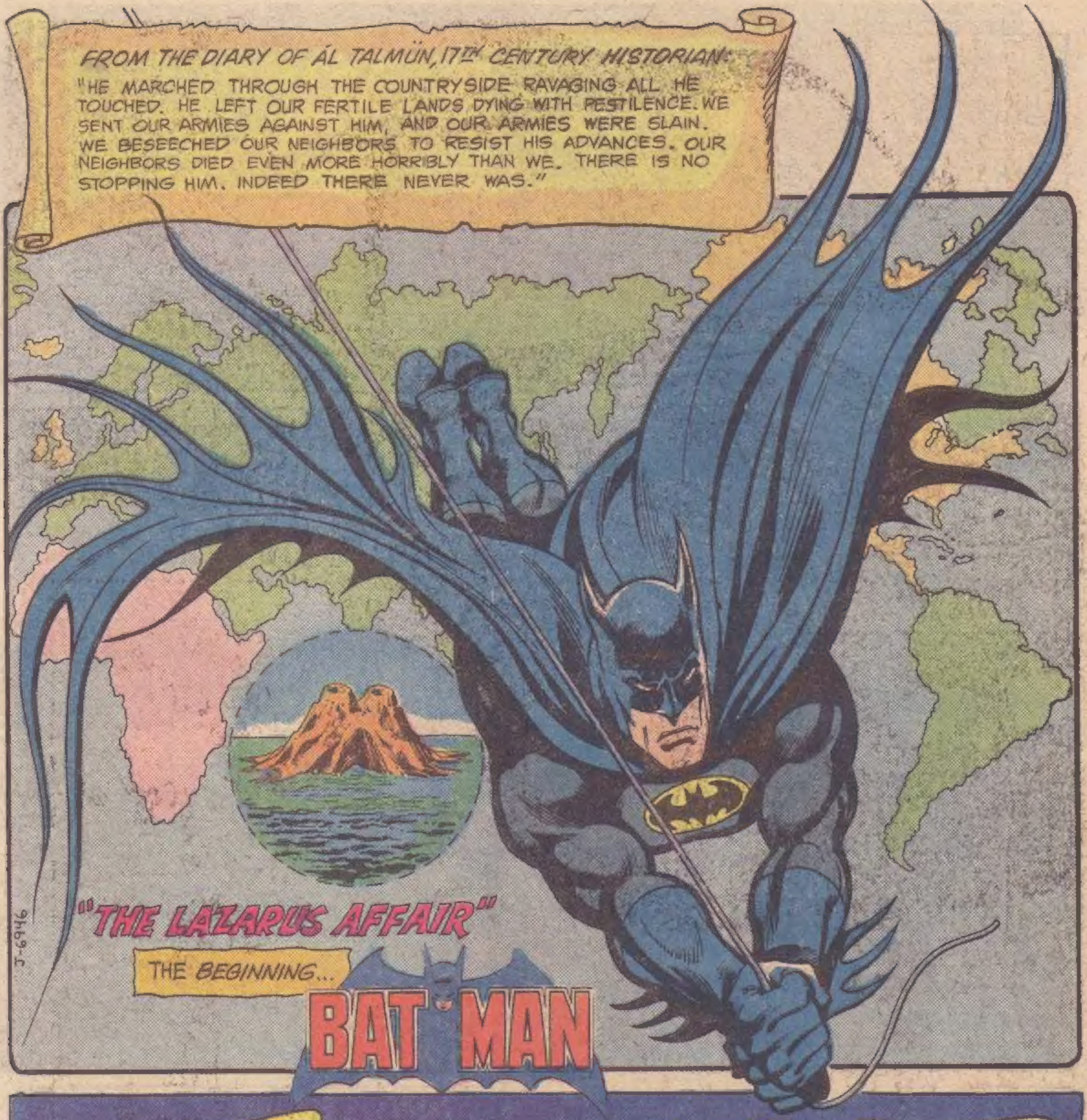
50¢
ALL NEW!
NO. 332
FEB.

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

BAT MAN

TALIA.. QUEEN of the ASSASSINS! WILL SHE SHOOT TO SAVE BATMAN-- OR TO KILL HIM?

PLUS: CATWOMAN-- QUEEN OF THE UNDERWORLD IN HER FIRST SOLO STORY !!


FROM THE DIARY OF ÁL TALMÜN, 17TH CENTURY HISTORIAN:
"HE MARCHED THROUGH THE COUNTRYSIDE RAVAGING ALL HE TOUCHED. HE LEFT OUR FERTILE LANDS DYING WITH PESTILENCE. WE SENT OUR ARMIES AGAINST HIM, AND OUR ARMIES WERE SLAIN. WE BESEECHED OUR NEIGHBORS TO RESIST HIS ADVANCES. OUR NEIGHBORS DIED EVEN MORE HORRIBLY THAN WE. THERE IS NO STOPPING HIM. INDEED THERE NEVER WAS."
J-6946
"THE LAZARUS AFFAIR"
THE BEGINNING...
BAT MAN

FALLOUT!

CHAPTER ONE:

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INFINITY ISLAND LIES ALMOST LOST IN THE *INDIAN OCEAN*, A FORGOTTEN HUSK OF LAND ABANDONED BY MAN WHEN THE *PORTUGUESE* FORSOOK THEIR EASTWARD CONQUESTS...

ITS *TWIN VOLCANOES* NO LONGER SMOKE WITH RUMBLING FIRE. ITS *ANDESITE PATHS* ARE NOW GROWN OVER WITH CENTURY-OLD WEEDS...

FOR ALL INTENTS, *INFINITY ISLAND* IS DEAD. YET, IF YOU LISTEN ABOVE THE LAPPING OF OCEAN WAVES, YOU CAN HEAR A FRENZIED *HEARTBEAT*. AND IF YOU LOOK INTO ITS CAVERNOUS CRATERS, YOU CAN SEE A *HUMAN HAND* REACHING UPWARD... *GRASPING* AS IF FOR DEAR LIFE...

HIS BREATHING IS HEAVY, LABORED, AS HE TUMBLES OVER THE CRATER'S RIM. HE STUMBLES, *TRIPPING* PAINFULLY DOWN THE VOLCANO'S SLOPING SIDE...

FROM HIS BACKPACK HE REMOVES AN *INFLATABLE RAFT*. THEN, HE HEARS THE BREAKING OF *TWIGS* FROM SOMEWHERE BEHIND HIM.

FRIGHTENED, HE SCRAMBLES ONTO THE RAFT AS THE TIDES CHURN *AWAY* FROM HIS TEN-YEAR-LONG *PRISON*...

HE LAYS *LOW* IN THE RAFT AS IT PULLS AWAY FROM THE ISLAND... HIS BREATHING IS *SHALLOW*. HE COUNTS EACH SECOND TO HIMSELF...

THEN, AT LONG LAST, HE REACHES FOR THE TINY *RADIO TRANSMITTER* HIDDEN DEEP IN HIS KNAPSACK...

...UNAWARE THAT HIS *EVERY MOVEMENT* IS BEING CAREFULLY SCRUTINIZED...

SIR, TEMPLETON'S ESCAPED. SHALL WE SEND OUT A *RETRIEVER*?

NOT YET, SALTZER. GIVE HIM *HOPE*. THEN WE SHALL *CRUSH IT!*

HALF A WORLD SEPARATES THE ICY INDIAN OCEAN FROM THE DANK, HUMID BATCAVE FAR BELOW THE WAYNE FOUNDATION...

YOU'RE STILL PLANNING TO LEAVE, ROBIN?

DOES IT LOOK LIKE I'M PITCHING A TENT?

I'M SPLITTING-- AS FAST AS I CAN!

THEN YOU AND YOUR CROOKED LADY FRIEND CAN HAVE THE BATCAVE ALL FOR YOUR LONESOME!

IT DOESN'T HAVE TO END THIS WAY. YOU CAN STAY...

YEAH? LISTEN THIS WAS YOUR DECISION. YOU WANT TALIA TO STAY...

AND IF SHE STAYS, I GO!

BATMAN, YOU MAY HAVE MADE YOUR BED, BUT FRANKLY, I THINK YOU SHORT-SHEETED YOURSELF!

DON'T BOTHER SHOWING ME THE WAY OUT. I KNOW IT!

MY LOVE, IT IS BETTER THIS WAY. HE IS STILL YOUNG. PERHAPS EXPERIENCE WILL TEACH HIM WHERE YOUR WORDS HAVE FAILED.

I WISH I WAS SURE OF THAT, TALIA...

ROBIN'S HEADSTRONG. HE'S AT THE AGE WHERE HE BELIEVES HE KNOWS EVERYTHING.

FRANKLY, I WORRY FOR HIM... MORE THAN HE COULD GUESS.

STILL, HE IS *HARDLY* A CHILD. HE MUST FACE THE *DISAPPOINTMENT* LIFE HAS TO OFFER.

ON HIS OWN, HE'LL DO THAT-- *IN SPADES.*

NOW, PARDON ME, I'VE GOT *WORK!*

IT SEEMS ONE OF BRUCE WAYNE'S BUSINESS *RIVALS* HAS BEEN *UNDERBIDDING* ME ON VIRTUALLY EVERY *MAJOR CONTRACT.*

IT'S SERIOUSLY EATING INTO WAYNE ENTERPRISE'S FINANCIAL FUTURE.

UNDERBIDDING? YOU SUSPECT SOMETHING *CRIMINAL?*

NOT SUSPECT. I'M POSITIVE. WE PURPOSELY HELD OUR LAST TWO BIDS TO THE *LOWEST FEASIBLE COSTS.* ANY LOWER AND WE'D *LOSE* MONEY.

IF *GREGORIAN FALSTAFF* UNDERBID US, HE'S TAKING A *LARGE LOSS!*

UHERE?

HMMM. FALSTAFF SEEMS TO HAVE MADE HIS MONEY MORE *RECENTLY* THAN I SUSPECTED...ONLY IN THE PAST *THREE YEARS...*

BANKS OUT OF *SWITZERLAND.* FIGURES! NO WAY TO *TRACE* WHERE HIS ORIGINAL FINANCING CAME FROM.

ORIGINAL FINANCING?

ACCORDING TO THE COMPUTER, IT'S OBVIOUS SOMEONE HAS *BANKROLLED* OUR MR. FALSTAFF.

WHICH MAKES HIM A *FRONT,* BUT FOR *WHOM?*

WHO WANTS WAYNE ENTERPRISES TO *LOSE* OUR SHIRTS SO BADLY THAT HE WOULD BE WILLING TO SPEND *MILLIONS* TO DO IT?

WHO--?

HE IS *TIRED* AS HE RISES FROM THE COMPUTER. BUT HIS WEARINESS IS NOT SOMETHING THE BATMAN WILL GIVE INTO. NOT YET. NOT WHILE THERE IS *WORK* THAT MUST BE DONE...

THE GOTHAM WIND WHIPS HIS FLOWING CAPE BEHIND HIM. THE COLD WINTRY AIR *REFRESHES* HIM AS HE GLIDES PAST THE TOWERING CITY SPIRES...

I'LL WORRY ABOUT FALSTAFF *AFTER* I'VE CLOSED DOWN HIS *SOURCE OF INFORMATION!*

WASN'T TOO DIFFICULT TO GUESS WHO WAS *FEEDING* HIM THE NUMBERS HE NEEDED TO *UNDERBID* US.

CAROLINE CROWN! BRUCE WAYNE'S NEW SECRETARY!

IT'S A *SHAME*... SHE WAS A *GOOD WORKER*...COULD HAVE MOVED *UP* IN THE COMPANY WITH VERY LITTLE EFF--*EH?*

PLEASE, I DON'T LIKE *DOING* THIS. WHY CAN'T FALSTAFF LEAVE ME *ALONE?*

BRUCE WAYNE'S BEEN *GOOD* TO ME... HE DOESN'T *DESERVE* THIS.

YOU WILL *CONTINUE* TO DO AS *ORDERED.*

REMEMBER, FALSTAFF HOLDS *ELIZABETH!*

OH, GOD! I--I'LL *KEEP* WORKING -- JUST *DON'T* HURT ELIZABETH AGAIN ... *PLEASE...?*

YOU DON'T HAVE TO *WORRY,* MISS CROWN-- *NO ONE* IS GOING TO BE HURT!

CHONNK!

GOOD LORD!

SURPRISED, BATMAN? WERE YOU EXPECTING SOMETHING... *MORE HUMAN?*

PERHAPS YOU EXPECTED SOMETHING YOU COULD EASILY *DEFEAT?*

WELL, BATMAN--WE *MUTATES* ARE ANYTHING BUT DEFEATABLE!

WHUMP!

INDEED, WE CAN *NOT* BE STOPPED-- NOT EVEN BY *YOU!*

CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING.

BUT SHOULD WE *WISH* IT, BATMAN--*YOU* COULD BE MOST EASILY ELIMINATED!

SKRAAK!

THE BATMAN IS SILENT AS HE MENTALLY PREPARES FOR THE *MOMENT OF IMPACT*...

AND, WHEN IT COMES, HE IS *READY* WITH A MOVE OF HIS OWN...

BRAKKOW

GAVE HIM *EVERYTHING* I'VE GOT -- AND HE ISN'T EVEN *FAZED*!

IF THE BATMAN CAN'T STOP IT, THEN IT'S *HOPELESS*! I--I'VE GOT TO KEEP ON *WORKING* FOR FALSTAFF...

...KEEP SELLING MY *SOUL* TO THAT CURSED FAT *DEVIL*!

NOTHING IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN *SAVING* ELIZABETH--*NOTHING*, NOT EVEN *MY LIFE*!

BUT, AS THE FRIGHTENED SECRETARY RACES THROUGH THE CHILLED GOTHAM NIGHT SHE REALIZES A FAINT *GLIMMER* OF HOPE...

KRAKOW!

THE WOMAN YOU CAME AFTER HAS *FLED*, AND THAT MEANS THIS *SKIRMISH* IS *OVER*!

DO NOT *INTERFERE* WITH US AGAIN, DETECTIVE...

OUR *NEXT* ENCOUNTER MIGHT BE YOUR *LAST*!

BUT, THE MUTATE'S FINAL WORDS ARE *LOST*, FOR THE BATMAN IS ALREADY *UNCONSCIOUS*...

AT FIRST THE *MUFFLED CRY* WAS DISMISSED AS THE *WAILING* OF A FREEZING HOUND, BUT, WHEN ROBIN HEARD THE *SHOUTS* FOR HELP...

WHAT *IS* IT WITH YOU PUNKS? YOU'RE SUCH *BIG SHOTS* ALL YOU CAN DO IS PREY UPON THE MEEK AND HELPLESS?

SCRAMBLE-- IT'S *ROBIN!*

THUNK

WHUMP!

YOU'RE *PATHETIC*, MAN. IF YOU'RE LUCKY, ONE DAY *YOU'RE* GONNA BE OLD ENOUGH TO BE SOMEONE *ELSE'S* VICTIM!

ONLY WHEN YOU ARE, I HOPE THERE'S NOBODY AROUND LIKE *ME* TO *SAVE YOU!*

MOVE IT, CLOWNS. IF THE KID'S HERE-- *BATMAN'S GOTTA BE CLOSE!*

KID? I'VE HAD *ENOUGH* WITH PEOPLE CALLING ME *KID!*

THWAMMO!

IT'S THE *COPS-- RUN!!*

BUT *BEFORE* THEY CAN MOVE...

THE *POLICE* HAVE THOSE PUNKS, BUT ARE *YOU* ALL RIGHT?

UNHH--MY SIDE... THAT *ANIMAL* KEPT POUNDING AT ME... I--I THINK IT'S *BLEEDING.*

AND MOMENTS LATER, AFTER THE *AMBULANCE* ARRIVES...

HE'LL PULL THROUGH, BUT I WONDER HOW *I'M* GONNA DO?

I NEED SOMEONE WHO WILL *LISTEN* TO ME... AND I THINK I KNOW *WHO* THAT SOMEONE MIGHT BE!

THE SOOTHING GREEN CORRIDORS OF *GOTHAM HOSPITAL* DO LITTLE TO CALM THE GROWING *ANGER* IN BRUCE WAYNE'S HEART...

FRANKLY, LUCIUS, IT'S BEGINNING TO GET ME *DOWN!*

GOTHAM GENERAL HOSPITAL

CAROLINE WAS PASSING DATA TO FALSTAFF. OUR *CASH FLOW* IS DANGEROUSLY *LOW!*

...AND SOMEONE IS OUT TO *SINK* WAYNE ENTERPRISES.

NOT TO MENTION THAT I'M *USELESS* TO YOU HERE IN THE HOSPITAL.

I'M REALLY *SORRY*, BRUCE. I WANT TO HELP, BUT--

NO, LUCIUS, YOU REST. YOU *NEED* IT AFTER THAT *MUGGING*.

THE POLICE STILL HAVE *NO IDEA* WHO DID IT, EH?

THEY DON'T, BUT I DO. LISTEN. YOUR SON TIMMY WORKED FOR A GANG *SECRETLY CONTROLLED* BY FALSTAFF...

FALSTAFF'S *GOONS* GO AFTER CAROLINE. FALSTAFF'S *NEWSPAPER* SPREADS *LIES* ABOUT ME. HE'S TRYING TO *BANKRUPT* ME. DO I HAVE TO CONTINUE?

I NEVER TOLD YOU THIS BEFORE, BRUCE--BUT FALSTAFF TRIED *HIRING* ME.

OF COURSE I TURNED HIM *DOWN*. BUT...

LUCIUS, IT'S GETTING *LATE*, AND I'VE GOT TO GET BACK TO THE *OFFICE*.

YOU TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF, OKAY?

BRUCE WAYNE WAS *TIRED* WHEN THE NIGHT BEGAN. NOW HE IS *EXHAUSTED* AS HE RETURNS TO HIS OFFICE WHERE...

CAROLINE?

M-MR. WAYNE. IT'S *URGENT*. I-I HAVE TO *SPEAK* TO YOU RIGHT AWAY.

AS HER STORY *UNFOLDS*, CAROLINE CROWN'S *FEAR* TURNS TO TEARS...

YOUR *DAUGHTER*? HOW LONG HAS FALSTAFF *HELD* HER AS HIS CAPTIVE?

ALMOST *FIVE MONTHS*, MR. WAYNE. YOU SEE, HE OWNS A *HOSPITAL* UPSTATE--

I SENT ELIZABETH THERE FOR *TREATMENT* AND NOW HE *WON'T* LET HER GO.

I-I'M SO *SORRY*, MR. WAYNE, BUT HE *MADE* ME SPY ON YOU.

THERE'S NO REASON FOR *YOU* TO APOLOGIZE, CAROLINE.

NOT WHEN IT'S *FALSTAFF* WHO IS GOING TO FEEL *SORRY*.

AND...

FALSTAFF, IT'S TIME THE TWO OF US *MET*!

M-MR. FALSTAFF, I'M SORRY, HE WOULDN'T LET ME *BUZZ* YOU.

OH, THAT'S ALL WELL, MISS GILROY. COME IN, BRUCE. COME IN.

COME SIT, M'BOY. YOU KNOW *KARLYLE KRUGERRAND*, MY ASSISTANT?

AH, THIS IS AN *HISTORIC* OCCASION, SON. TWO *MAGNATES* OF POWER SHARING ONE ROOM. *HISTORIC*.

CUT THE *BULL*, FALSTAFF. I'M *NOT* HERE FOR SMALL TALK!

FIRST, YOU'RE HOLDING CAROLINE CROWN'S DAUGHTER. I WANT HER *RETURNED*.

SECOND, YOUR *UNDERHANDED BUSINESS METHODS* ARE ABOUT TO BE *EXPOSED*. MS. CROWN HAS AGREED TO *TESTIFY*.

YOU'RE *THROUGH*, FALSTAFF!

THROUGH? MY BOY, YOU *DO* HAVE A SENSE OF HUMOR! SON, I'VE ONLY *BEGUN*!

YOU SEE, I HAVE PURCHASED THE *MORTGAGES* ON ALL YOUR *ASIAN OIL PROPERTIES*.

I'M THROUGH? OH, DEAR LAD-- IT'S *YOU* WHO ARE THROUGH, *YOU*!!

HA! HA! HA! HA! HA!

CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING.

OF COURSE, SON, IF YOU AGREE TO *SELL* ME THE REST OF YOUR NOW VIRTUALLY *WORTHLESS* ASSETS, I'LL LET *YOU* RUN MY COMPANIES FOR ME.

COMPANIES SUCH AS *FALSTAFF ENTERPRISES!* THE *FALSTAFF FOUNDATION!*

WELL, *SPEAK UP*, SON. I DON'T *HEAR* YOUR ANSWER!

I DON'T THINK YOU'D *WANT* TO HEAR WHAT I HAVE TO SAY. *GOOD DAY!*

THE BATCAVE IS *DARK*, WHICH LENDS ITSELF BEST TO THE BATMAN'S *MOOD*...

I CHECKED AND HE'S *RIGHT*. HE'S BOUGHT UP ALL *MY ASIAN PROPERTY*-- AND I TIED UP HALF MY *OTHER ASSETS* TO RAISE THE *CASH* FOR THOSE LAND LEASES.

BLAST THE MAN! HE'S BEATING *ME!*

YOU'RE *TIRED*, MY LOVE. YOU'VE BEEN WORKING WITHOUT SLEEP FOR TWO DAYS NOW.

YOU NEED *REST* BEFORE YOU PLAN YOUR *REVENGE*.

GO TO BED, MY LOVE, YOU NEED TO SLEEP...

...TO SLEEP...

...TO SLEEP...

THERE, MY *LIPSTICK* CONTAINED ONLY A *MILD SEDATIVE*, BUT ENOUGH.

TOMORROW YOU WILL DO WHAT YOU WILL DO, WHILE *TONIGHT* I DO WHAT *MUST* BE DONE.

SWEET DREAMS, MY HANDSOME DETECTIVE... TILL MORNING.

THE ROOM IS DARK, AND ONLY THE LIGHT OF A SINGLE FLUTTERING *CANDLE* BATHES THE CHAMBER IN A WARM LUMINESCENCE...

FRANKLY, I DIDN'T KNOW WHO ELSE I COULD TURN TO WHO COULD *HELP* ME THE SAME WAY *YOU* CAN.

YOU KNOW THE BATMAN. YOU *UNDERSTAND* HIM.

AND MAYBE I DON'T. IT'S JUST... WELL, I THINK *TALIA* IS PLAYING HIM FOR A *FOOL*.

WHY CAN'T HE SEE *THROUGH* HER?

YOU KNOW, I TRIED *WARNING* HIM, BUT HE *WOULDN'T* LISTEN TO ME.

HE STILL THINKS OF ME AS A *KID*, YOU KNOW, THE *BOY* WONDER. HIS TEENAGE *SIDEKICK*. NOTHING MORE.

MAYBE I'M *NOT* AS GOOD AS HE IS. BUT I'M *NOT* HALF AS BAD AS HE THINKS I AM.

I NEED YOUR HELP.

PLEASE?

SELINA KYLE SAYS NOTHING. HER FACE BETRAYS NO EMOTIONS...

SHE SIMPLY THINKS FOR A LONG WHILE, AND THEN AN *ENIGMATIC SMILE* CROSSES HER MOST BEAUTIFUL FACE...

INTRIGUED, THE BATMAN INVESTIGATES THE SLENDER FIGURE DART FROM THE MAIN FOUNTAIN BUILDING TO HAIL A PASSING CAB...

WHEN A TAXI STOPS THE MAN AT NIGHT REMOVES

"AND WHY DID SHE TRY DRUGGING ME?" TWO QUESTIONS THE FIRST SHOULD BE ANSWERED SHORTLY...

THE SECOND WILL WAIT.

TAXI

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FALSTAFF!

MAYBE BRUCE WAYNE CAN'T DO ANYTHING ABOUT THAT GRINNING GLUTTON--

--BUT THE BATMAN CAN...

...AND THE BATMAN WILL!

FALSTAFF, WE'VE GOT BUSINESS!

BATMAN?

KARLYLE BE KIND ENOUGH TO KILL OUR GUEST, WILL YOU?

WITH PLEASURE, MR. FALSTAFF!

BE WARNED, MANHUNTER-- FOR *TWENTY* [redacted] I'VE TRAINED TO *MASTER* ALL THE FIGHTING ARTS--

AND NOW-- *NO MAN IS MY EQUAL!*

KARLYLE...

REMIND ME TO BE *IMPRESSED!*

POOR KARLYLE, I BELIEVE YOU WILL HAVE DAMAGED HIS *FRAIL EGO!*

BUT NOT AS *PERMANENTLY* AS MY *MUTATES* SHALL DAMAGE YOU!

HIS MIND IS KEEN AS THE ARCTIC WIND, HIS REFLEXES INSTANTANEOUS FROM YEARS OF BATTLE.

YOU SEE, DETECTIVE-- BEFORE YOU CAN REACH ME, YOU MUST FIRST GO THROUGH MY *GAUNTLET OF DEATH!*

BEFORE GREGORIAN FALSTAFF *COMPLETES* HIS THREAT, THE BATMAN IS ALREADY A *BLUR OF ACTION*...

WHUMP!!

CONTINUED ON 5TH PAGE FOLLOWING

I SENSE TREMENDOUS *TIREDNESS*, BATMAN. HOW LONG CAN YOU CONTINUE TO *AVOID* MY DEADLY *TAIANA!*

SOON YOU SHALL *COLLAPSE*, AND WHEN YOU DO--

NNIAAARGGHHH!!

MUTATE, YOU *TALK* TOO MUCH!

THE BATMAN IS *GRIM* AS HE SCOOPS THE FIGHTING *TAIANA* STICK FROM THE FLOOR. HE KNOWS THE MUTATE WAS *CORRECT*...

BUT HE *FIGHTS* HIS GROWING EXHAUSTION. HE WILL *NOT* GIVE IN TO HIS WEAKNESSES...

KLOPP!

CERTAINLY NOT UNTIL *ALL* THAT MUST BE DONE *HAS BEEN DONE*...

FIGHTING THESE CREATURES IS A *WASTE OF TIME*... HAVE TO GET THROUGH TO *FALSTAFF* HIMSELF...

ONLY *ME* CAN STOP HIS MUTATES--

--AND ONLY HE CAN GET ME CAROLINE CROWN'S *DAUGHTER!*

KRANG!

SPEAKING OF FALSTAFF, HE'S *RUNNING* LIKE A *SCARED CHICKEN*...

...AND *TALIA'S* ALREADY GONE. WELL, I'LL WORRY ABOUT HER *LATER*--

--RIGHT NOW I'VE GOT TO GET *MYSELF FREE* FROM THIS OVERSIZED *GOLEM!*

HMMM... WONDER IF FALSTAFF IS THEIR ACTUAL *MASTER*. NOTHING IN HIS *RECORD* TO INDICATE ANY *SCIENCE BACKGROUND*...

UNHOK!

... AND THESE CREATURES WERE DEFINITELY *SCIENTIFICALLY MUTATED!*

FIRST THINGS FIRST-- AND THAT MEANS *FINDING* FALSTAFF!

THIS *ISN'T* GOING AS PLANNED-- AND IF I SHOULD *FAIL*...

...THE *MASTER* WILL SEE ME *DESTROYED!*

STILL, GREGORIAN FALSTAFF IS *ALWAYS* PREPARED!

IT'S *OVER*, FALSTAFF!

OVER? *MY* DEAR LAD, IT'S *NEVER* OVER--

--NOT UNTIL THE *TRUMP CARD* IS PLAYED!

BY THE WAY, M'BOY, HAVE YOU MET *ELIZABETH CROWN*? LOVELY GRL, ISN'T SHE?

BUT, ONE *MOVE* FORWARD, AND SHE *WON'T* BE LOVELY MUCH LONGER.

YOU'RE *SCUM*, FALSTAFF.

BUT SUCH A *CLEVER* ONE, LAD.

AND NOW, M'BOY, I BID YOU *FAREWELL!*

SSSSSS

NOT NECESSARILY, MY CHUBBY FRIEND!

TALIA!

WUMP!

NO! NOOOO!!!

GREGORIAN FALSTAFF IS WIDE-EYED AS HE STUMBLES INTO THE SHIMMERING *BUBBLE*.

HIS FLESH *CONTORTS* HORRIBLY FOR AN INSTANT... AND THEN HE IS *NO MORE*.

YAGGHHHH!!

THAT WEAPON HAD BEEN *DESIGNED* BY MY FATHER. FALSTAFF ONCE *WORKED* FOR HIM.

I THOUGHT IF I CAME HERE I COULD *STOP* HIS ATTACKS ON YOU.

PERHAPS, IN A SENSE, I DID.

BUT, WERE YOU SAVING *ME* OR MAKING SURE FALSTAFF *COULDN'T TALK?*

OUTSIDE, THE PADDING OF RACING FEET...

SELINA, I THINK YOU WERE *RIGHT*-- STARTING OUR INVESTIGATION WITH FALSTAFF IS THE *ONLY* THING THAT MAKES ANY--

--SENSE...?

NO.

END

EPILOGUE

HE AWAKENS FROM HIS SLEEP STILL COLD, THE ICY OCEAN WATERS WASH OVER HIM, BUT HE NO LONGER CARES...

HE IS AWAY FROM *INFINITY ISLAND*. THAT IS ALL THAT MATTERS.

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN TEN YEARS, ARCHER TEMPLETON FEELS *JOY*.

HE THROWS BACK HIS DRAWN, SALLOW FACE AND *LAUGHS!*...

NOW, SALTZER-- *NOW!*

RETRIEVER ACTIVATED, S.R.! PHASE *RED* FOR *PERMANENCE!*

ARCHER TEMPLETON'S LAUGH CHOKES IN HIS THROAT AS THE GREAT CRIMSON RETRIEVER ARCS TO *ENGULF* HIM...

AND, AS HIS FLESH BEGINS TO *DISINTEGRATE*, HIS FINAL TRAGIC THOUGHTS ARE...

"... I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN... I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN..."

THE RETRIEVER, NOW SATISFIED, *RETURNS* TO INFINTY ISLAND, LEAVING BEHIND ONLY A SMALL RUBBER *RAFT*, AND AN EVEN SMALLER, STILL FUNCTIONING, RADIO TRANSMITTER...

BEEP... BEEEP ... BEEPP... BEEP ... BEEP...

NEXT: The **china syndrome...**

PROLOGUE: HIS NAME IS *JACK KLANNON*, AND HE IS A STRONG-ARM THUG WHO NORMALLY DELIGHTS IN PUSHING AROUND CREEPS *SMALLER* THAN HE.

RIGHT NOW, HOWEVER, FOR PERHAPS THE *FIRST* TIME IN HIS CROOKED LITTLE LIFE, *JACK* IS THE ONE BEING PUSHED...

CAT'S PAW!

AND, TO MAKE MATTERS ALL THE *WORSE*, TO MAKE IT ALL THE MORE *DEGRADING* FOR THE BIG, TOUGH *MUSCLE MAN* HE IS..

...JACK KLANNON IS BEING PUSHED BY A *FEMALE*...

A FEMALE HE IS DEATHLY *AFRAID OF*...

A FEMALE WHO GOES BY THE NAME OF...

CATWOMAN

LIP, KLANNON. THE TWO OF US HAVE THINGS TO *DISCUSS*.

C'MON, CAT... LEMME GO. THEY'LL *KILL* ME IF I TALK!

AND I MAY DO *WORSE* IF YOU DON'T.

BE SENSIBLE, FRIEND--

--TALK NOW. MY *ENEMIES* CONSIDER ME QUITE ... UNFRIENDLY.

=choke=

THE WORDS SPUTTER FORTH QUICKLY NOW, AND WHEN HE IS DONE, JACK KLANNON FALLS TO THE GROUND A PITIABLE, *BROKEN* MAN...

HE RAISES HIS HEAD TO LOOK AT HIS TORMENTOR, BUT SHE IS ALREADY *GONE*...

ONE MORE SHADOW AMONG ALL-TOO-MANY OTHERS.

JACK KLANNON LIMPS HOME. TONIGHT HE WILL TAKE A BUS TO *CHICAGO* AND SOON FADE INTO CRIMINAL OBSCURITY.

MEANWHILE, THE CATWOMAN CONTINUES HER MIDNIGHT PROWL...

KLANNON DIDN'T LIE. THOSE CREEPS ARE BREAKING INTO THE *ROXANNE CHEMICAL WAREHOUSE*...

BUT *WHY*--? I WISH I KNEW...

BUT, THAT WON'T *STOP* ME FROM MOVING INTO *ACTION!*

GREETINGS, FRIENDS. AREN'T WE OUT A TAD *LATE* TONIGHT?

WHAT--*YOU?* CATWOMAN? BUT YOU'RE A CRIMINAL LIKE US!

I WAS, MY FRIEND. BUT I'VE *REFORMED!*

STILL, IT'S *NOT* YOUR CRIMINAL ACTIVITIES THAT INTEREST ME-- I WANT *INFORMATION!*

THWOK!

BABE, THAT'S ONE THING YOU *AIN'T GETTIN'!*

FACT IS, ALL YOU'RE GONNA GET IS-- *DEAD!!*

PAL, ONE THING I LEARNED AS A CRIMINAL IS DON'T *WASTE* YOUR TIME TALKING!

BLAM!

ARRGH!

I HAD ENOUGH TIME TO PREPARE A *SANDWICH* WHILE YOU WERE BLABBING ABOUT SHOOTING ME!

CRIPES! THAT BROAD'S TOO GOOD! THERE AIN'T NOTHIN' WORSE'N AN *ANGRY DAME!*

BUT LET HER TAKE ON THE *OTHERS!* I'M GETTING BACK TO KRUGERRAND WITH THESE *CHEMICALS!*

HIS NAME IS JOSEPH WALTERS, AND JOSEPH *BELIEVES* HE HAS MADE GOOD HIS ESCAPE.

JOSEPH, HOWEVER, IS A *FOOL!*

SHORTLY...

MR. KRUGERRAND, I GOT THE *STUFF* YOU WANTED.

BUT THE *CATWOMAN* GOT TOMMY AND VINCE!

CATWOMAN? WHAT'S THAT SHE-DEVIL AFTER *US* FOR?

I HEAR SHE SCARED OFF JACK KLANNON. NOW *THIS?*

THINGS ARE GETTING *OUT OF HAND.* I'D BETTER CONTACT *THE MASTER!*

MASTER? BUT I THOUGHT MR. FALSTAFF WAS *DEAD!*

WE *ALL* HAVE OUR MASTERS ... EVEN GREGORIAN FALSTAFF!

HE WAS WORKING FOR *SOMEONE ELSE...* SOMEONE WITH *TRUE POWER.*

SOMEONE WHO PROMISES TO MAKE US ALL *VERY RICH* WHEN THIS IS OVER.

JOSEPH, GROUP TOGETHER A *NEW GANG.* I'LL NEED THEM WITHIN AN *HOUR.*

YES, SIR, MR. KRUGERRAND

SO, FALSTAFF WAS WORKING FOR SOMEONE ELSE. I *THOUGHT* AS MUCH.

NOW, YOU, KRUGERRAND, WILL LEAD ME TO YOUR *REAL MASTER!*

OR *MISTRESS,* AS I'M MORE LIKELY TO BELIEVE.

I'M *CERTAIN* TALIA IS BEHIND THIS.

AND, ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, I INTEND TO *PROVE* THAT TO THE BATMAN!

AND, AN HOUR LATER...

IS EVERYTHING READY, JOSEPH?

YES, SIR. THE *UNITS* HAVE BEEN PLACED IN THE *VAN!*

WHAT IN BLAZES IS GOING ON NOW?

AND WHAT ARE THOSE LARGE *CANNISTERS* THEY WERE LOADING?

I'M GETTING A *BAD FEELING.*

WONDER IF I SHOULD GET *THE BATMAN* IN ON THIS?

NO!! I DON'T NEED TO RELY ON *ANYONE ELSE.*

THE CATWOMAN HAS ALWAYS PROWLED *--ALONE!*

SHE IS A LITHE FIGURE DARTING 'TWEEN ALLEY AND SHADOW, FOLLOWING THE WINDING COURSE OF THE SLOW-MOVING VAN...

THEN FINALLY SHE COMES TO A STOP AS THE VAN PULLS TOWARD THE GOTHAM CITY NORTHERN DIVISION *POWER STATION...*

NORTH POWER S

SHE IS SILENT AND STILL AS THE VAN *CRASHES* THROUGH THE HIGH-GAUGE STEEL GATE...

SHE IS UNMOVED AS THREE POWER COMPANY GUARDS ARE GUNNED DOWN INTO *UNCONSCIOUSNESS...*

THEN...

VERY GOOD. OUR *VOLUNTEERS* ARE STILL ASLEEP AND READY.

READY TO JOIN IN THE *MASTER'S NEW ORDER!*

THE BATMAN MAY HAVE DESTROYED OUR FIRST *MUTATES...*

...BUT NOBODY WILL DESTROY THESE!

MUTATES? IS *THAT* WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT?

AND IF THIS IS HER GANG, *WHERE IS TALIA?*

MEANWHILE, WITHIN THE ELECTRIC GENERATING PLANT...

WITH FALSTAFF DEAD, OUR *GENERATORS* IN THE BASEMENT WERE *IMPOUNDED*.

BUT, IF WE'RE TO CHANGE OUR FRIENDS HERE INTO *MUTATES*, THEN ONLY *THIS* POWER PLANT CAN HELP US.

AND GOTHAM CITY CAN GO TO *BLAZES!*

SUDDENLY, THE CITY IS BLANKETED IN DARKNESS AS GOTHAM'S POWER SUPPLY IS ROUTED TOWARD A PURPOSE MOST *SINISTER*...

ALL THE *HOOKUPS* ARE SET?

THEY ARE, SIR. THE ELECTRICITY WILL ACTIVATE THE *CHEMICALS* WE STOLE...

THESE GUYS WILL BE CHANGED LIKE THE *FIRST BUNCH!*

WRONG!

SNIK!

WHAT?

THE ONLY THING TO BE CHANGED IS YOUR *CLOTHING!*

FROM BROOKS BROTHERS TWEED TO *PRISON GRAYS!*

CAT-WOMAN?

THUNK!

LISSEN, WITCH! YOU'RE *NOT* THE BATMAN!

SLAM!

AND THERE'S NO WAY YOU'RE GOING TO TAKE *ME ON!*

YOU KNOW SOMETHING, KRUGER-RAND--?

YOU'RE A *BLASTED FOOL!*

I FOLLOWED YOU HERE BECAUSE I THOUGHT SOMEONE WAS *BEHIND THIS INSANITY.*

BUT EVEN THOUGH I'M WRONG, I STILL INTEND TO *STOP YOU!*

YOU CAN'T, WITCH! YOU'RE ALREADY *TOO LATE!*

THE NEW ORDER IS BEING *CREATED!*

WITHIN MINUTES THEY WILL BE UNSTOPPABLE *DREADNOUGHTS!*

AND WHEN MY MUTATES ARE FULLY FORMED, I SWEAR I'LL HAVE THEM *REND* YOU LIMB-FROM-LIMB!

IN THAT CASE, MISTER, WE'LL JUST HAVE TO STOP YOU THAT MUCH *SOONER!*

FORGET IT, SISTER. NO DAME'S GONNA STOP ME!

NO DAME, KRUGERRAND ... WOMAN--

--CATWOMAN!

KARLYLE FALLS CHOKING TO THE GROUND AS THE CAT-WOMAN HEARS A FAINT *TICKING* FROM BEHIND...

SHE SPINS AND LEAPS BACKWARD JUST AS...

BLAMM!

WHAT?

EVERYTHING WENT UP IN FLAMES! KRUGERRAND COULDN'T *CONTROL* THE ENERGY OUTPUT!

FIRST FALSTAFF DEAD, *NOW HIM*...

AND I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY EITHER OF THEM WAS TRYING TO CREATE *MONSTERS!*

JUST AS I'M NOT CERTAIN WHO THEY WERE *ACTUALLY* WORKING FOR!

I WAS SO CERTAIN IT WAS TALIA. *SO* CERTAIN SHE WAS *PLAYING* WITH THE BATMAN... LEADING HIM INTO SOME DANGEROUS *TRAP*...

BUT NOW, I JUST DON'T KNOW. I'M WONDERING IF SEEING BATMAN WITH TALIA MADE ME...*JEALOUS* IN SOME STUPID MANNER!

BLAST! AM I REALLY THAT *PETTY*?

I WISH I KNEW... I JUST WISH I KNEW...

AS THE CATWOMAN MERGES WITH THE SHADOWS OF NIGHT, OTHER SHADOWS BEGIN TO *SHIFT*...

...AND ONE SEEMS ALMOST TO *COME ALIVE* WITH THE SOUND OF MOCKING *LAUGHTER!*

END

MARV WOLFMAN / WRITER * DON NEWTON & STEVE MITCHELL / ARTISTS * ADRIENNE ROY / COLORIST * TODD KLEIN / LETTERER * PAUL LEVITZ / EDITOR

Dear People,

There is no better way to start off an excellent comic than with an excellent cover. BATMAN #327 was one and had one. I prefer Joe Kubert's Batman if it is inked by Dick Giordano but it was still an impressive cover. Nicely colored, too.

"Asylum Sinister" was a good story as well as a catchy title. The story opened very well. The splash page showing Batman as an outsider and his narration of the early part of the story were both novel ideas.

The story looked to be interesting, though not great, until Milo put Batman into the room with all of the insane people. At this point, the story became great. Having the patients aiding Batman was also a good idea. Who would believe that Milo was finally defeated by a gang of lunatics where the Batman couldn't manage it?

"Express to Nowhere" was one of the best short stories I've ever seen. It had a simple yet not overly outright mystery, characterization, snappy dialogue, and a lot of action. This is a lot more than I've come to expect from eight page stories.

All considered, BATMAN #327 was one of the best issues in many a month. Sparkling stories by Wein and Barr plus crisp, clear art by the teams of Novick & McLaughlin and Giordano & Mitchell made the issue a joy to behold. Kudos to all and a special thanks to Len on his last issue.

Jon Green
415 Shelter Rd.
Ronkonkoma, NY 11779

The cover of #327 elicited many comments, which leads us to let you know that the story was written around the cover—which had been drawn almost a year earlier. We still have another Kubert classic (and a couple of Starlin specials) awaiting similar treatment.—PL.

* * * * *

Dear Paul:

After watching "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" on TV, then seeing Stanley Kubrick's film "The Shining", you can well assume what I was thinking when I read BATMAN #327 "Asylum Sinister"

Although Professor Milo does not play the role as a crazed lunatic in the same flavour of Jack Nicholson, I would like to praise Len Wein in his attempt to show us how some of Batman's foes view the world, through the Batman's eyes. This was truly a unique device in writing a good story and Len's use of continuity helped the story immensely. Some writers would have stuck Two-face or the Joker in the story just for a bit of sensationalism, but Len explained why their cells were empty. Paul insists that Maxie Zeus be used as often as possible and Zeus not wanting anything to do with Milo's scheme seemed realistic. However, has everyone forgotten that Rupert Thorne is still in Arkham? A showdown between Batman and Thorne has been anticipated since Doc Phosphorus met Bats last.

The second tale "Express to Nowhere" was unfortunately predictable, but the story itself was good because of the dialogue between Robin and Batman. The Giordano-Mitchell art was fantastic.

Even though Len is leaving, I am happy his buddy Marv Wolfman will be taking over. Marv's old mystery tales in Batman (like the Dr. Tzin-Tzin tale reprinted in Detective 477) would fit in the new style because they featured a villain and lots of action too. Despite what the other readers stated in the letter-col I wouldn't mind seeing a return bout with a more realistic Capt. Boomerang. Dr. Polaris and the Hellgrammite are fine villains that we don't see enough of, too. Now Paul, back in your editorial in BATMAN #311, you stated that we would see exciting tales featuring villains every time out, and we have. But you also said we could expect the return of Tweedledum and Tweedledee and I'm still waiting, but not so patiently, also for the cross-over you mentioned from one of your magazines to another. Now the past 2 years have been very enjoyable for me and I'm looking forward to my next years as a Batman reader, but get that Tweedledum and 'dee story done in a hurry, I've only been waiting for 18 months.

Dave Lauder
764 Mona Drive
Kingston, Ontario
Canada K7M 5C2

Plans for the Tweedle-brothers departed with Len, we're afraid, since he's the only one who dared think he could pull off the story. And while we're answering questions, Andrew Laubacher of Albion, NY, wrote in to ask what happened to the promised Batman novel, and we're proud to announce that the completed manuscript of "Joker in the Pack" by Gerry Conway is now on our desk.—PL.

* * * * *

Dear Paul:

"Asylum Sinister" by Len Wein was an extremely well-crafted story; "Express to Nowhere" by Mike Barr was an outstanding reminder of how truly terrific the Batman-Robin team can be. Put them all together and they spell...well, it ain't "Mother", but it sure is excellence. *Batman* #327 was just that.

The first tale was set in Arkham Asylum, and inmate Batman had full opportunity to show his stuff. His facile escape from a strait-jacket and his "sub-tongue" picklock smuggling only serve to demonstrate to us that this man is a modern-day Houdini as well as Sherlock Holmes. Yet the man is always a fighter! Only Batman could fight a group of henchmen in a straight-jacket...and win!

The Batman-Robin story was highly action-packed, but then again, that is the key word for such yarns with this team. Barr is a talented newcomer who should be given more important assignments immediately. The Giordano/Mitchell art didn't hurt, either.

One suggestion: how about using all 25 pages for a Batman-Robin full-length story?

Sincerely,
Mark Lagasse
R.D. #1 Box 116
Hoosick Falls, New York 12090

It's hard to arrange artistic schedules to permit 25 pagers, so we've compromised for the duration of our "Lazarus Affair" saga by interweaving back-ups with leads to tell one story (using one artist some issues, two others). After that we plan a series of Batman stories in front with Robin solos in the back, and team-ups as often as desireble.—PL.

* * * * *

NEXT MONTH: The long road continues to stretch forward as Batman goes east for "The China Syndrome", while Robin and Catwoman are "Shanghaied" (in a special story guest starring King Farraday!). Be here—Paul Levitz.

* * * * *

NOW ON SALE! DC COMICS PRESENTS #30 (Superman and Black Canary) ** FLASH #294 (with Firestorm by Jim Starlin) ** JUSTICE LEAGUE #187 ** SUPERMAN #356 ** WONDER WOMAN #276 (featuring the Huntress and Power Girl) ** TEEN TITANS #4 ** SECRETS OF THE LEGION #2 ** and WORLD'S FINEST #267.

COMING ATTRACTIONS! SUPERBOY #14 ** LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES #272 (with a special bonus comic prevue of DIAL H FOR HERO by Marv Wolfman and Carmine Infantino) ** SUPER FRIENDS #41 ** GREEN LANTERN #137 ** WARLORD #42 (now featuring Omac) ** ACTION #516 ** MYSTERY IN SPACE #116 ** BRAVE & BOLD #171 (Batman and Scalphunter in a wild tale by Gerry Conway and Garcia Lopez) ** and DETECTIVE #499 (Blockbuster and Batman trapped together—and a Batgirl solo, too!)